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trade regime. The Doha round should be encouraged to move forward. It's moving too slowly, but it should move forward.

President Bush. Thank you, sir.

Senior Minister Goh. Thank you.

President Bush. Thanks for coming. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:36 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Tenzin Gyatso, the Dalai Lama of Tibet.

Proclamation 8235—National D.A.R.E. Day, 2008

April 9, 2008

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

For 25 years, Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) has given school children across America an opportunity to gain the skills they need to avoid involvement in drugs, gangs, and violence. On National D.A.R.E. Day, we recognize those individuals who teach America's children how to resist peer pressure and live productive, drug-free, and violence-free lives.

Millions of our Nation's young people have learned about the dangerous effects of drug abuse with the help of the D.A.R.E. program. Parents, law enforcement officials, teachers, and counselors are on the front lines of this effort and are sending our kids a clear message that drug use is dangerous and unacceptable. In classrooms across the country, police officers are answering students' tough questions about drugs and crime and encouraging an open line of communication between students and law enforcement.

My Administration is committed to reducing drug use among young people, and we are working to cut the supply of drugs coming into our country and fight demand here at home. Additionally, we are helping spread the message of drug prevention through the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign and the Partnership for a Drug-Free America. The Helping America's Youth initiative, led by First Lady Laura Bush, is working with community leaders to address challenges facing young people on a daily basis. These and other efforts are helping to combat the destructive cycle of drug addiction.

All Americans have a responsibility to encourage others to turn away from drug abuse and to make good choices in life. During National D.A.R.E. Day, we renew our commitment to providing our youth the knowledge and encouragement they need to resist the pressures that can lead them to experiment with drugs and violent activities. By working together, we can help our children build lives of purpose and strengthen our communities, one heart and one soul at a time.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim April 10, 2008, as National D.A.R.E. Day. I urge all young people to make right choices and call upon all Americans to recognize our collective responsibility to combat every form of drug abuse and to support all those who work to help our children avoid drug use and violence.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this ninth day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-second.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:58 a.m., April 10, 2008]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on April 11.

Remarks on the War on Terror

April 10, 2008

Thank you. Please be seated. Good morning. Fifteen months ago, I announced the surge. And this week, General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker gave Congress a detailed report on the results.

The immediate goal of the surge was to bring down the sectarian violence that threatened to overwhelm the Government in Baghdad, restore basic security to Iraqi communities, and drive the terrorists out of their

safe havens. As General Petraeus told Congress, American and Iraqi forces have made significant progress in all these areas. While there is more to be done, sectarian violence is down dramatically. Civilian deaths and military deaths are also down. Many neighborhoods once controlled by Al Qaida have been liberated. And cooperation from Iraqis is stronger than ever, with more tips from residents, more Iraqis joining their security forces, and a growing movement against Al Qaida called the Sons of Iraq.

Improvements in security have helped clear the way for political and economic developments described by Ambassador Crocker. These gains receive less media coverage, but they are vital to Iraq's future. At the local level, businesses are reopening, and Provincial councils are meeting. At the national level, there's much work ahead, but the Iraqi Government has passed a budget and three major benchmark laws. The national Government is sharing oil revenues with the Provinces. And many economic indicators in Iraq, from oil production to inflation, are now pointed in the right direction.

Serious and complex challenges remain in Iraq, from the presence of Al Qaida to the destructive influence of Iran to hard compromises needed for further political progress. Yet with the surge, a major strategic shift has occurred. Fifteen months ago, America and the Iraqi Government were on the defensive. Today, we have the initiative. Fifteen months ago, extremists were sowing sectarian violence. Today, many mainstream Sunni and Shi'a are actively confronting the extremists. Fifteen months ago, Al Qaida had bases in Iraq that it was using to kill our troops and terrorize the Iraqi people. Today, we have put Al Qaida on the defensive in Iraq, and we're now working to deliver a crippling blow. Fifteen months ago, Americans were worried about the prospect of failure in Iraq. Today, thanks to the surge, we've renewed and revived the prospect of success.

With this goal in mind, General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker have submitted recommendations on the way forward. After detailed discussions with my national security team, including the Secretary of Defense, Secretary of State, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, I've accepted these recommendations.

A recommendation likely to receive the most attention is on troop levels. General Petraeus has reported that security conditions have improved enough to withdraw all five surge brigades by the end of July. That means that by July 31st, the number of U.S. combat brigades in Iraq will be down by 25 percent from last year.

Beyond that, General Petraeus says he'll need time to consolidate his forces and assess how this reduced American presence will affect conditions on the ground before making measured recommendations on further reductions. And I've told him he'll have all the time he needs.

Some have suggested that this period of evaluation will be a pause. That's misleading, because none of our operations in Iraq will be on hold. Instead, we will use the months ahead to take advantage of the opportunities created by the surge and continue operations across the board.

All our efforts are aimed at a clear goal: a free Iraq that can protect its people, support itself economically, and take charge of its own political affairs. No one wants to achieve this goal more than the Iraqis themselves. Those who say that the way to encourage further progress is to back off and force the Iraqis to fend for themselves are simply wrong. The Iraqis are a proud people who understand the enormity of the challenges they face and are anxious to meet them. But they know that they still need our help until they can stand by themselves. Our job in the period ahead is to stand with the Iraqi Government as it makes tough choices and makes the transition to responsibility for its own security and its own destiny.

So what will the transition look like? On the security front, thanks to the significant progress General Petraeus reported this week, it is clear that we're on the right track. In the period ahead, we will stay on the offense against the enemy. As we speak, U.S. Special Forces are launching multiple operations every night to capture or kill Al Qaida leaders in Iraq. Coalition and Iraqi forces are also stepping up conventional operations against Al Qaida in northern Iraq, where terrorists have concentrated after being largely pushed from central and western Iraq. And Prime Minister Maliki's Government

launched operations in Basra that make clear a free Iraq will no longer tolerate the lawlessness by Iranian-backed militants.

In the period ahead, we'll also continue to train, equip, and support the Iraqi security forces, continue to transfer security responsibilities to them as Provinces become ready and move over time into an overwatch role. The Iraqi Army and police are increasingly capable and leading the fight to secure their country. As Iraqis assume the primary role in providing security, American forces will increasingly focus on targeted raids against the terrorists and extremists. They will continue training Iraqi forces, and they will be available to help Iraq's security forces if required.

On the economic front, Iraq is moving forward. With Iraq's economy growing, oil revenues on the rise, and its capital investment expanding, our economic role in the country is changing. Iraqis, in their recent budget, would outspend us on reconstruction by more than 10 to 1. And American funding for large-scale reconstruction projects is approaching zero. Our share of Iraq's security costs will drop as well, as Iraqis pay for the vast majority of their own army and police. And that's the way it should be. Ultimately, we expect Iraq to shoulder the full burden of these costs. In the period ahead, Iraq's economy will increasingly move away from American assistance, rely on private investment, and stand on its own.

On the political front, Iraq has seen bottom-up progress, as tribes and other groups in the Provinces who fought terror are now turning to rebuilding local political structures and taking charge of their own affairs. Progress in the Provinces is leading to progress in Baghdad, as Iraqi leaders increasingly act together, they share power, and they forge compromises on behalf of the nation. Upcoming elections will consolidate this progress. They'll provide a way for Iraqis to settle disputes through the political process instead of through violence. Iraqis plan to hold Provincial elections later this year, and these elections will be followed by national elections in 2009.

On the diplomatic front, Iraq will increase its engagement in the world, and the world must increase its engagement with Iraq. To help in this effort, I'm directing Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus to visit Saudi Arabia on their trip back to Iraq. I'm directing our Nation's senior diplomats to meet with the leaders in Jordan, the UAE, and Qatar and Kuwait and Egypt. In each capital, they will brief them on the situation in Iraq and encourage these nations to reopen their Embassies in Baghdad and increase their overall support for Iraq. This will be followed by Secretary Rice's trip to the third Expanded Neighbors Conference in Kuwait City and the second International Compact with Iraq meeting in Stockholm.

A stable, successful, independent Iraq is in the strategic interests of Arab nations. And all who want peace in the Middle East should support a stable, democratic Iraq. And we will urge all nations to increase their support this year.

The regime in Tehran also has a choice to make. It can live in peace with its neighbor, enjoy strong economic and cultural and religious ties, or it can continue to arm and train and fund illegal militant groups which are terrorizing the Iraqi people and turning them against Iran. If Iran makes the right choice, America will encourage a peaceful relationship between Iran and Iraq. If Iran makes the wrong choice, America will act to protect our interests and our troops and our Iraqi partners.

On each of these fronts, security, economic, political, and diplomatic, Iraqis are stepping forward to assume more responsibility for the welfare of their people and the fate of their country. In all these fronts, America will continue to play an increasingly supporting role.

Our work in Iraq will still demand sacrifices from our whole Nation, especially our military, for some time to come. To ease the burden on our troops and their families, I've directed the Secretary of Defense to reduce deployment lengths from 15 months to 12 months for all active Army soldiers deploying to the Central Command area of operations. These changes will be effective for those deploying after August 1st. We'll also ensure that our Army units will have at least a year home for every year in the field. Our Nation

owes a special thanks to the soldiers and families who've supported this extended deployment. And we owe a special thanks to all who serve in the cause of freedom in Iraq.

The stress on our force is real, but the Joint Chiefs have assured me that an all-volunteer force—our All-Volunteer Force is strong and resilient enough to fight and win this war on terror. The trends in Iraq are positive. Our troops want to win. Recruiting and retention have remained strong during the surge. And I believe this: I believe the surest way to depress morale and weaken the force would be to lose in Iraq.

One key to ensuring that our military remains ready is to provide the resources they need promptly. Congress will soon consider a vital emergency war funding request. Members of Congress must pass a bill that provides our troops the resources they need and does not tie the hands of our commanders or impose artificial timelines for withdrawal. This bill must also be fiscally responsible. It must not exceed the reasonable $108 billion request I sent to Congress months ago. If the bill meets all these requirements, it will be a strong show of support for our troops. If it doesn't, I'll veto it.

Some in Washington argue that the war costs too much money. There's no doubt that the costs of this war have been high. But during other major conflicts in our history, the relative cost has been even higher. Now, think about the cold war. During the Truman and Eisenhower administrations, our defense budget rose as high as 13 percent of our total economy. Even during the Reagan administration, when our economy expanded significantly, the defense budget still accounted for about 6 percent of GDP. Our citizens recognized that the imperative of stopping Soviet expansion justified this expense.

Today, we face an enemy that is not only expansionist in its aims but has actually attacked our homeland and intends to do so again. Yet our defense budget accounts for just over 4 percent of our economy, less than our commitment at any point during the four decades of the cold war. This is still a large amount of money, but it is modest—a modest fraction of our Nation's wealth, and it pales when compared to the cost of another terrorist attack on our people.

We should be able to agree that this is a burden worth bearing. And we should be able to agree that our national interest require the success of our mission in Iraq.

Iraq is the convergence point for two of the greatest threats to America in this new century: Al Qaida and Iran. If we fail there, Al Qaida would claim a propaganda victory of colossal proportions, and they could gain safe havens in Iraq from which to attack the United States, our friends, and our allies. Iran would work to fill the vacuum in Iraq, and our failure would embolden its radical leaders and fuel their ambitions to dominate the region. The Taliban in Afghanistan and Al Qaida in Pakistan would grow in confidence and boldness. And violent extremists around the world would draw the same dangerous lesson they did from our retreats in Somalia and Vietnam. This would diminish our Nation's standing in the world and lead to massive humanitarian casualties and increase the threat of another terrorist attack on our homeland.

On the other hand, if we succeed in Iraq, after all that Al Qaida and Iran have invested there, it would be an historic blow to the global terrorist movement and a severe setback for Iran. It would demonstrate to a watching world that mainstream Arabs reject the ideology of Al Qaida and mainstream Shi'a reject the ideology of Iran's radical regime. It would give America a new partner with a growing economy and a democratic political system in which Sunnis and Shi'a and Kurds all work together for the good of their country. And in all these ways, it would bring us closer to our most important goal: making the American people safer here at home.

I want to say a word to our troops and civilians in Iraq. You've performed with incredible skill under demanding circumstances. The turnaround you have made possible in Iraq is a brilliant achievement in American history. And while this war is difficult, it is not endless. And we expect that as conditions on the ground continue to improve, they will permit us to continue the policy of return on success. The day will come when Iraq is a capable partner of the United States. The day will come when Iraq is a stable democracy that helps fight our

common enemies and promote our common interests in the Middle East. And when that day arrives, you'll come home with pride in your success and the gratitude of your whole Nation. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:24 a.m. in the Cross Hall at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; and Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq.

Statement on House of Representatives Action on Colombia Free Trade Agreement Legislation

April 10, 2008

Today's unprecedented and unfortunate action by the House of Representatives—led by Speaker Pelosi—to change the rules governing legislation to implement our trade agreement with Colombia is damaging to our economy, our national security, and our relations with an important ally. It also undermines the trust required for any administration to negotiate trade agreements in the future.

By lowering tariffs for products made in America and sold in Colombia, this trade agreement would level the playing field for American workers and provide a boost for our economy at a vital time. Rather than supporting the opening of markets for our farmers and manufacturers, Democratic congressional leaders instead listened to narrow special interests and followed an isolationist path.

Today's action by the House of Representatives also sends a damaging message to the world that Congress cannot be counted on to keep its promises. Colombia is one of our strongest allies in the Western Hemisphere. Colombia's leaders are showing courage in improving the safety of their citizens while battling narcoterrorists that receive support from anti-American forces outside Colombia. The message Democrats sent today is that no matter how steadfastly you stand with us, we will turn our backs on you when it is politically convenient.

In addition, by changing the rules for how it considers legislation to implement trade agreements, the House has severed a bond of trust between the executive branch and the Congress, and with our trading partners, that has served our Nation well for decades. In order to negotiate trade agreements, we empower our trade representatives with the promise that Congress will consider trade agreements with a timely up-or-down vote. By breaking this bond, Democrats have undercut not just this administration, but future administrations as well. This will weaken our Nation's ability to negotiate fair trade agreements for American workers, farmers, ranchers, and service providers.

During the 16 months since the Colombia free trade agreement was signed, my administration has gone above and beyond any reasonable effort to achieve a bipartisan path for considering this agreement. At the expense of our economy and our national security, the House has instead chosen to take a shortsighted and partisan path.

Proclamation 8236—Pan American Day and Pan American Week, 2008

April 10, 2008

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

On Pan American Day and during Pan American Week, we underscore the importance of a peaceful, democratic, and prosperous Western Hemisphere where our common values continue to strengthen friendships, advance freedom, and encourage fair trade.

The love of liberty is deeply rooted in our hemisphere. In the earliest days of our Republic, the people of the United States inspired patriots throughout the Americas to take their own stand for independence. Today, the decent and honorable people of both American continents are united in the desire for freedom and democracy. The United States stands with those who respect human rights and those who seek to bring change and hope to their countries. We look forward to the day when all of the Americas are wholly free and democratic.

My Administration remains committed to helping our friends as they advance the cause